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**THE EDUCATION OF MIGRANT CHILDREN
IN NEW JERSEY**

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE
Office of Education

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(Prepared by Curtis Gatlin for the Advisory Committee on Migrant Education of the New Jersey Migrant Labor Board. Mr. Gatlin is a consultant for the Education Committee of the Migrant Labor Board, and is a field representative of the National Child Labor Committee, a voluntary agency chartered by Congress in 1907).

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GOVERNOR

RAYMOND F. MALE
COMMISSIONER

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GOVERNOR ROBERT B. MEYNER chats with happy children during one of his visits to a school for migrant children.

THE EDUCATION OF MIGRANT CHILDREN IN NEW JERSEY

FARMERS NEED MIGRANTS

For more than 40 years New Jersey has used migratory farm workers from outside the state. Last year there were 22,000 of these workers—called *migrants*. They lived in about 2,700 camps on or near the farms on which they worked.

New Jersey farmers depend upon this migrant army to reinforce year-round farmhands and local seasonal labor. In 1959 migrant workers helped cultivate and harvest crops worth \$122,000,000.

Among these migrant workers each year are an estimated 1,200 families, most of them Negroes from the South, who live and work on nearly 500 farms found mainly in seven counties—Burlington, Cumberland, Gloucester, Salem, Mercer, Monmouth, and Middlesex. With these families there are usually 1,500 to 1,800 children under age 17; about two-thirds of them are of school age.

Though some migrant children arrive as early as mid-April in one or two counties, more of them will come to the state in June or early July.

About half of the migrant families settle on farms in south Jersey in May and June; the other half of these families locate on potato farms in the tri-county area—Mercer, Middlesex, and Monmouth—in early July. Then, as the harvest season wanes, some of the families begin leaving the state at the end of August.

By mid-October more than half of them are gone and by the end of November the rest will have left the state (except for a few families who may try to stay over the winter).

CHILDREN GET POOR SCHOOLING

The children of migratory farm workers are more disadvantaged educationally than any other in our country, according to the United States Office of Education. Although of about average ability to learn, they have lower educational achievement and attend school less than any other group of children. More than 50% of them are found to be from one to four years behind in school by the time they reach age 14.

These children, like any others, are required and permitted to attend school in New Jersey. This has not always been true, but became a fact of the New Jersey school law in 1947 through an amendment (Chapter 138, P.L. 1947).

Each spring and fall some migrant children attend local schools for a few weeks. There were 402 of them reported in the public schools in the fall of 1958, 144 in the spring of 1959, and 464 from September through November in 1959.

Altogether approximately 60 schools enroll migrant children in either spring or fall or both. It is known that some of these children do not attend schools at all even though they are here while school is in session.

The educational plight of migrant children is a serious one in nearly every State. In their "home" states—Florida in the case of New Jersey migrants—they often enter school late in the fall and leave early in the spring.

Other school days are missed while they work in the crops with their parents to augment the family's low income. Last year a family with five school-age children was found in a New Jersey camp; none of the children had attended school during four years of shuttling between this state and Florida.

The children of migratory farm workers seldom reach high school. Though complete data are not available, school reports from several states show that possibly as few as one in fifty enters high school, and fewer than this number graduates. Consequently, vocational training courses and school guidance services usually offered in the high schools are virtually out of reach of these youngsters.

A SUMMER EXPERIMENT

For several years there has been public concern that these children have the opportunity in New Jersey to make up some of their schooling deficiency. For this reason an experimental summer school was begun for them in 1947, through the cooperation of several departments of state government.

This work was started by the Bureau of Migrant Labor two years after it was established as the state agency responsible for the well-being of this important migrant labor supply and the welfare of the communities they serve.

The first migrant summer school was held at Court Street School in Freehold. Each year since (except 1950) one or two summer schools—5 or 6 weeks each—were operated by the Bureau in collaboration with the State Department of Education with an average enrollment of 66 pupils per school.

In 1959 three schools conducted at Cranbury, Freehold and Fairton enrolled 158 children, ages 5 to 12. With an estimated 1,000 to 1,200 school-age children in the state during the summer, these schools reached about one migrant child in seven. Additional schooling is needed for more of this group.

Funds for the summer sessions are appropriated each year by the Legislature in the budget of the Bureau of Migrant Labor. In 1959, the three schools were operated at a cost of \$12,413.45.

In undertaking these special summer schools the Migrant Labor Board—governing body of the Bureau—hoped they would stimulate local school districts to continue such programs, with an eventual network of summer schools adequate to serve all migrant children. This, however, has not come about primarily due to the limited resources of the local school districts affected.

A BIGGER EFFORT

Early last year the Migrant Labor Board began working with the National Child Labor Committee in a renewed effort to develop a more comprehensive educational program for migrant children. The basic aim of this approach is to marshal public and private resources of the state to provide more days of schooling in New Jersey for these children. Because of the possible example this program may be to other states, it is called the Migrant Education Demonstration Project.

Specific aims of the Project include:

- (1) to establish public interest and support through state and local citizens' committees;
- (2) to conduct spring and fall surveys, through volunteers, to check potential and actual enrollment of migrant children in local schools;
- (3) to determine feasible locations for additional summer schools;
- (4) to secure adequate financing to enlarge the summer school facilities;
- (5) to develop a long-range program adequate to meet continuing needs.

A Citizens' Advisory Committee on Migrant Education (to the Migrant Labor Board) has been set up with representatives of nineteen organizations in the State (See Appendix A.) On a similar basis county groups are being established, at least in areas of heavy concentration of migrant children. (See Appendix B.) To date these

groups have been begun in Monmouth, Cumberland, Gloucester, and Burlington counties.

MORE SUMMER SCHOOLS NEEDED

Though migrant family camps are somewhat scattered, there are several townships in which camps are clustered close enough to make feasible other summer schools in addition to those planned again this year at Fairton (Cumberland County), Freehold (Monmouth County), and Cranbury (Middlesex County). Four such areas are:

- (1) Stowe Creek, Greenwich, and Hopewell townships in Cumberland County.
- (2) Logan, East Greenwich, Woolwich, and South Harrison townships in Gloucester County.
- (3) West Windsor township in Mercer County.
- (4) Upper Penns Neck, Oldmans, Pilesgrove, and Mannington townships in Salem County.

Existing summer schools may be expanded by bringing in more pupils through extending the school bus routes. Supplemental funds* are being sought to make possible enlargement of the 1960 summer school program. Greater responsibility for this education program is being assumed by the State Department of Education.

During the spring and early summer, volunteers will be making migrant camp visits in the southern counties to learn how many school-age migrants arrive during the school term, how many do not enroll in local schools, and where they are concentrated for possible summer school enrollment.

NOTE: Subsequent to the preparation of this statement, Governor Robert B. Meyner has arranged to double the capacity of the summer schools this year.

APPENDIX A

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APPENDIX B

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MIGRANT EDUCATION

of the N. J. Migrant Labor Board

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Vice Chairman: Mrs. John Carter
Secretary: Mrs. Chrystine Shack

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR REPRESENTATIVES

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Catholic Daughters of America, New Jersey Chapter, Mrs. Douglas Hennessy
Consumers League of New Jersey, Mrs. Warren Beebe
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New Jersey American Legion, Child Welfare Division, Herbert Rowe
New Jersey CIO Council, Anthony Zuccarello
New Jersey Congress of Parents and Teachers, Mrs. Frederick Dawson
New Jersey Council of Churches, Department of Work Among Migrants, The Rev. Carl Wolf
New Jersey Education Association, Mrs. Chrystine R. Shack
New Jersey Farm Bureau (observer), William Perry Watson
New Jersey Regional of the National Council of Jewish Women, Mrs. Saul Liss
New Jersey School Superintendents Association, Dr. Robert B. Norris
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New Jersey State Federation of District Boards of Education, Mrs. Lefferts A. Loetscher
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David T. DeGraffenreid, Public Member of the Migrant Labor Board
John M. Hunter, Extension Service, College of Agriculture, Rutgers University

CONSULTANT

Curtis Gatlin, National Child Labor Committee

APPENDIX C

DISTRIBUTION OF MIGRANT CHILDREN IN NEW JERSEY, 1956-1959

Information available from the Bureau of Migrant Labor shows the following distribution of children (ages 1-16) in eight counties:

	<u>1956</u>	<u>1957</u>	<u>1958</u>	<u>1959</u>
Atlantic	84	57	69	22
Burlington	156	98	129	108
Cumberland	229	394	340	372
Gloucester	203	170	187	155
Mercer	218	226	247	212
Middlesex	317	335	266	231
Monmouth	253	338	204	252
Salem	130	114	119	203

Migrant Education Demonstration Project
4/25/60